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RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 004739

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: ABE TO CALL FOR SWEEPING CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION

REF: TOKYO 4561

Classified By: AMBASSADOR J. THOMAS SCHIEFFER. REASONS 1.4 (B)(D)

11. (SBU) Summary. Shinzo Abe, the odds-on favorite to replace Junichiro Koizumi as Japan's next prime minister, plans to make constitutional revision a cornerstone of his campaign in the run up to the September 20 LDP presidential contest, according to an unofficial version reported in the Nihon Keizai Newspaper on August 17. While the platform is said to include plans to rewrite the Constitution and end the ban on the exercise of collective self-defense, the bulk of the report points to a general continuation of the structural reforms begun by PM Koizumi. Nihon Keizai Shimbun contacts tell us that this information likely came directly from someone in Abe's inner circle; it may have been intended to blunt criticism that Abe's run for office has been devoid of policy debate. End summary.

12. (U) Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) presidential race front-runner, Chief Cabinet Secretary (CCS) Shinzo Abe, plans to resurrect the issue of constitutional revision during the campaign leading up to the September 20 election, according to an unofficial outline of his policy platform published in the August 17 Nihon Keizai Shimbun. Abe's plan calls for rewriting portions of the Constitution, including the controversial Preamble, to make clear that it is Japan's own national document. The platform also specifies that Japan should possess a "self-defense military," an interpretation of Article 9 that effectively endorses the right to collective self-defense. The platform proposes to base further discussions of constitutional revision on the LDP bill submitted in the last Diet session.

13. (U) In addition to provisions on constitutional reform, Abe's proposed platform encompasses a wide range of reforms, including: an emphasis on economic growth and spending cuts without reference to a rise in the consumption tax; a comprehensive package to improve pension and medical benefits; a plan to offer assistance to failed companies and their employees; revision of the Basic Education Law based on a return to traditional values; and free trade agreements with Asian neighbors and other resource-rich countries. These proposals clearly demonstrate Abe's intention to continue the structural reform policies of Prime Minister Koizumi, but adopt a somewhat more conservative tone with respect to certain economic and social policies, according to

the news report. The platform also stresses the importance of the U.S.-Japan alliance, especially as a counterweight to China.

14. (C) Abe was not expected to issue a formal policy platform until he officially declared his candidacy on September 11. However, Embassy Tokyo contacts at Nihon Keizai Shimbun tell us that the leaked platform draft must have come directly from someone in Abe's inner circle, if not Abe himself. A senior staffer to the former chairman of the LDP Constitutional Revision Research Committee wondered whether this unofficial version really represented Abe's thinking and, if so, whether it might not change before the formal platform was released. He worried that the approach outlined in the report might prove too polarizing. A Lower House Diet Member on the DPJ Constitutional Revision Committee agreed that the more Abe pushes on constitutional revision, the harder DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa will push back, making it ultimately more difficult to achieve real reform.

15. (C) Comment. Abe may have leaked this information to serve as a trial balloon, as well as to blunt criticism that his runaway lead in the LDP presidential race has deprived the party of a policy debate. Given the critical reaction we have heard from members of the LDP, DPJ, and coalition partner Komeito, however, Abe's platform as reported on the front page of one of Japan's most trusted dailies will not foster inter-party cooperation in the upcoming Diet session.
SCHIEFFER